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INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE
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RUMICEA/JICCENT MACDILL AFB FL
RUEPADJ/CJTF-HOA J2X CAMP LEMONIER DJ
RUZEFAA/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/E AND DRL
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LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PROP](#) [SOCI](#) [PGOV](#) [ER](#)
SUBJECT: RADIO ASENA IS THE NEW OPPOSITION VOICE

REF: A. ASMARA 67
[1](#)B. ASMARA 28

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Opposition website assenna.com recently launched Radio Asena, airing hour-long broadcasts on Mondays and Wednesdays in Tigrinya and on Fridays in Arabic. ("Asena" means "good" in the congratulatory sense). The station, found on 9610kHz, reports on a variety of topics including mass arrests and detentions, military defections, destructive government policies, and military corruption. While these topics are standard opposition website fare, Radio Asena has turned up the heat with hard-hitting programming. Two programs in particular have caught the attention of the Eritrean public: an interview allegedly with a dissatisfied military official and a report of a politically motivated murder in Asmara. End Summary.

RADIO ASENA ASCENDENT

[1](#)2. (SBU) Radio Asena reportedly has developed a strong following in Eritrea and eclipsed awate.com as the leading source of anti-GSE information. It appears to be more credible than other sources. While most opposition-based news reports are unverifiable, we have been able to corroborate two of Radio Asena stories with firsthand accounts from embassy contacts. Radio Asena reported on the mass arrest at Radio Bana (Ref A) and the arrest of 10 employees at the Ministry of Immigration (MOI) accused of selling exit visas. A close embassy source with regular contact with the MOI corroborated the latter information. Contributing to Radio Asena's standing are its three well-known news anchors, two of whom were formerly with GSE-controlled Eri-TV.

INTERVIEW WITH DISGRUNTLED MILITARY?

[1](#)3. (SBU) In early March Radio Asena aired what it claimed was an interview with a discontented Eritrean officer, who said he was part of a group demanding major government reform. He said the group delivered to senior military officials a list of demands that included an end to national service and implementation of the constitution. The nearly one-hour long interview supposedly took place via cellphone. (Note: Post has been hearing different versions of this story since last November, including one with tanks in the streets and midnight visits to GSE officials.) The officer said the

Minister of Water, Resources, and Environment, Woldemichael Gebremariam, had been nominated as the mediator between the government and the dissident military. Curiously, Woldemichael was reassigned in the recent Cabinet shake-up to be Minister of Local Government, a powerless position that indicates he has been largely sidelined.

POLITICALLY MOTIVATED MURDER

¶4. (SBU) The radio station also reported on the death of Mr. Fesseha Woldedawit, head of the Finance Department at the Northern Red Sea Administrative Region. Mr. Fesseha allegedly discovered a 30 million nakfa (\$2 million) discrepancy in the department's records and was found dead soon after reporting the matter to the appropriate officials. Authorities stated Mr. Fesseha committed suicide by strangling himself with a laptop cord, according to Radio Asena.

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: Post contacts indicate Radio Asena is the buzz of the town, with good reason: it's reaching more